

Table 6 - Environmental Impacts of Proposed ACEC Designations

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Impacts Common to All Action Alternatives which Include a Proposed ACEC Designation</i>	<p><i>Tribal Rights/Trust Resources and Native American Religious Concerns/Traditional Uses:</i> Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated ACECs) would have no effect on Tribal rights and trust resources or Native American religious concerns and traditional uses.</p> <p><i>Wilderness Study Areas:</i> Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated ACECs) would have no effect on any of the 14 WSAs in the planning area.</p> <p><i>Wild and Scenic Rivers:</i> Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated ACECs) would have no affect on the nine Wild and Scenic River segments identified as eligible for a suitability study.</p>	<p><i>Existing ACECs:</i> The proposed ACEC designations would have no effect on the existing, designated ACECs.</p> <p><i>Soils/Vegetation/Water Quality:</i> The proposed ACEC designations and management actions (e.g., OHV limitations, minerals restrictions) may reduce the likelihood of surface disturbance in localized areas within the ACECs. Any improvements in soils, vegetation, and water quality are expected to be minor.</p> <p><i>Tribal Rights/Trust Resources and Native American Religious Concerns/Traditional Uses:</i> None of the proposed ACEC designations or management actions would cause adverse impacts to Native American traditional uses/values or resources under tribal rights. The proposed management actions to protect ACEC values (visual resource management and off-highway vehicle use designations, minerals restrictions, riparian habitat management, etc.) would protect traditional uses/values and trust resources by maintaining scenic resources, reducing the extent of surface disturbance, and maintaining or improving some riparian areas and fish and wildlife resources. Proposed OHV designations may restrict some access to traditional use areas or religious sites, but these effects are mitigated through exceptions for off-road (cross-country) travel.</p> <p><i>Wilderness Study Areas:</i> The proposed ACEC designations and management actions would not impair the 14 WSAs (totaling 159,506 acres) that occur in the planning area. The proposed actions complement guidance contained in the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (USDI - BLM, 1995). Where multiple designations would occur (portions or all of a proposed ACEC overlap a designated WSA and/or eligible Wild and Scenic River) the most stringent management guidance would apply.</p> <p><i>Wild and Scenic Rivers:</i> None of the proposed ACEC designations would negatively affect the eligibility of the nine identified segments to be included in a future suitability study for potential designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers.</p>		

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Resource/Program Impacts by Alternative, for Each Proposed ACEC				
<i>Bennett Hills ACEC</i>	<p>The nominated ACEC area primarily encompasses lands managed by the Shoshone Field Office, but also includes approximately 1,220 acres managed by the Four Rivers Field Office - BLM (along the western edge of King Hill Creek). The following analyses would apply to the entire nominated ACEC area.</p> <p><i>Cultural Resources:</i> General protection and management of cultural resources would continue in accordance with relevant law, regulation, and policy. Cultural resources would be fully protected, except for situations where unauthorized actions may occur (e.g., vandalism or unauthorized excavation and collection).</p>			
	<p>The following impacts would occur under existing management (no ACEC designation of the nominated area).</p> <p><i>Cultural Resources:</i> Specific management actions designed to pro-actively manage cultural resources in the nominated ACEC area would not necessarily not be implemented. However, an ACEC designation is not required to initiate a Cultural Resource Management Plan or other protective management actions, if additional management direction is deemed necessary to manage and protect the cultural resources in the nominated area.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[continued]</p>	<p>The following impacts would occur as a result of the proposed ACEC designation and management.</p> <p><i>Cultural Resources:</i> The proposed Bennett Hills ACEC designation and management actions would highlight protective management of the cultural resources occurring within the ACEC. OHV limitations would reduce surface disturbance and the risk of damage to cultural resources from cross-country vehicle travel. OHV limitations would also reduce public access that may result in unauthorized collection or vandalism. (Note: OHV use in the ACEC area is light; these OHV limitations would only slightly reduce the risk of resource damage.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[continued]</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1.</p>	

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Bennett Hills ACEC</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<p><i>Minerals Resources:</i> Continuation of existing management would have no effect on minerals resources, exploration, or development. Site-specific cultural clearances would continue to be required prior to approval of minerals actions; this would ensure that proposed mineral activities in the nominated ACEC area do not adversely affect cultural resources.</p> <p><i>Off-highway Vehicle Use:</i> Continuation of existing management would have no effect on OHV use. Current OHV use in the Bennett Hills area is light; if motorized vehicle use increases to the point where cultural resources are being affected, the BLM has authority to restrict OHV use in order to protect cultural or other resource values (43 CFR 8341.2).</p>	<p><i>Cultural Resources (continued):</i> Completing a Cultural Resources Management Plan would identify proactive management for cultural sites throughout the ACEC, rather than just the project-oriented site protection that occurs under current management. Mineral material sales restrictions would eliminate the potential for surface disturbance from this activity on most of the ACEC's acres.</p> <p>Although the intent of the ACEC designation would be to protect cultural values, there is some risk that highlighting those values would increase public knowledge of the resources' locations and thereby increase the potential for vandalism or unauthorized excavation and collection.</p> <p>[continued]</p>		

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Bennett Hills ACEC</i> <i>(continued)</i>		<p><i>Minerals Resources:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Mineral material site development could still be allowed adjacent to the three specified routes, but approval of the actions would require site-specific NEPA and cultural resource inventory, clearances, and mitigation. These sites may not meet all future demands for easily accessible mineral materials that are used to maintain existing public roads. In addition, county road districts would have to travel greater distances to haul gravel to remote country roads from sites along one of the main travel routes.</p> <p>[continued]</p>		

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<i>Bennett Hills ACEC</i> <i>(continued)</i>		<p><i>Minerals Resources (continued):</i> At present, only 7 of the 17 existing community pits and common use areas are located along State Highways 75 and 46 and the Bliss-Hill City Road. There is an apparent need for mineral material and free use sites in other parts of the proposed ACEC area. It is unlikely that the BLM could fully satisfy the public's future demand for saleable minerals if new community pits and common use areas are limited to sites along these three routes.</p> <p><i>OHV Use:</i> The proposed OHV limitations would have negligible impacts to OHV users, since minimal use presently occurs in the affected area. Exceptions for off-road travel are granted to Tribal members and may be granted to others who require periodic cross-country motorized access within the ACEC.</p>		

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Camas Creek ACEC/RNA</i>	<p>Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated ACEC area) would have no effect on the lands program, livestock grazing program, minerals resources, or off-highway vehicle use.</p> <p><i>Lands:</i> Under existing management the BLM can pursue various lands actions to benefit riparian habitat along Camas Creek, such as pursuing conservation easements or seeking to acquire lands from willing sellers. An ACEC designation is not required to initiate or implement these lands actions. If these actions were implemented, the benefits would be as described in Alternative 2, paragraph 1.</p> <p><i>Livestock Grazing:</i> The BLM has already identified the need for a wing fence at the sheep bridge to manage livestock impacts. This action can be implemented without an ACEC designation. Under current management and in normal water years, there is adequate livestock water in the allotment away from Camas Creek. [cont.]</p>	<p><i>Lands Program:</i> Acquiring lands from willing sellers would increase the total contiguous length of riparian habitat managed by the BLM. This would increase the probability of achieving the potential natural community along more of the stream. Potential off-site effects of a more extensive properly functioning riparian zone may include improved water quality, possibly increased survival of nesting migratory birds, and increased dispersal of riparian vegetation (as a result of an increased number of flowering plants). Pursuing conservation easements would provide a buffer from potential development of adjacent private lands.</p> <p>Prohibiting new land use authorizations would have no impact as this is a small area and actions could be located elsewhere. In addition, there is little current or foreseen use in the area.</p> <p>[continued]</p>	<p>Same as Alternative 1. In addition, the proposed changes in land tenure adjustment priorities (see Appendix 1) would increase the emphasize on retaining and acquiring riparian habitats such as those found in the Camas Creek area. This would increase the probability that the BLM would pursue conservation easements and acquisition of lands from willing sellers.</p>	

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<p><i>Camas Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p><i>Livestock Grazing</i> (continued): Thus, sufficient livestock water should be available after the wing fence is constructed.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> Existing management would not limit the development of mineral materials in the nominated ACEC area. However, the geographic setting makes it unlikely that minerals development would occur in the nominated area. In the event that mineral materials from the general vicinity are needed to satisfy public demand, this need could likely be satisfied by disposal from nearby public lands.</p> <p><i>Noxious Weeds:</i> The current noxious weed inventory and treatment effort would not be intensified in the ACEC area under this alternative. Current weed control activities consist of using ground-spraying equipment to chemically treat infestations of diffuse knapweed associated with the livestock trail leading to and from the Macon Sheep Bridge crossing. [continued]</p>	<p><i>Livestock Grazing:</i> Closing the proposed ACEC to livestock grazing would have minimal effect, since little to no use is presently occurring in the ACEC area. No AUMs would be lost and no reductions would occur on the affected allotment (Macon Flat) as a result of the designation. Access to the Sheep Bridge for sheep trailing would be provided through wing fences. Minimal impacts to livestock operators may occur in the late spring/early summer if their stock are present elsewhere in the allotment, since the livestock would no longer have access to this portion of the creek for water.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Closing the ACEC to mineral material sales and free use permits would prevent the disposal of saleable minerals from the ACEC, but would not have a significant impact on the BLM's ability to satisfy the public demand for saleable minerals. [continued]</p>		

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<p><i>Camas Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p><i>Noxious Weeds</i> (continued): Small, isolated infestations of leafy spurge have been chemically treated with backpack spray equipment. Under existing funding and staffing levels, the diffuse knapweed and leafy spurge in the nominated ACEC area would likely be contained, but not eradicated.</p> <p><i>Recreation</i>: Not designating the nominated ACEC would have no impact on existing recreation use. Small numbers of people would continue to hunt and fish in the ACEC area. The existing access points and primitive parking area are likely to stay in the same condition as at present.</p> <p><i>Riparian Areas</i>: The nominated ACEC area is expected to remain a functioning riparian zone under existing management. The sheer canyon walls form a natural barrier to many kinds of disturbance that may otherwise occur in a riparian area (e.g., livestock grazing), and existing [continued]</p>	<p><i>Minerals</i> (continued): Any application for the disposal of mineral materials could likely be satisfied by disposal from nearby public lands.</p> <p><i>Noxious Weeds</i>: Emphasis on eliminating non-native invasive plant species would help ensure that existing weed populations are controlled and new infestations are treated to the extent possible. It is unlikely that weed populations could ever be completely eradicated, since new (e.g., windborne) sources of infestation are likely to be introduced over time.</p> <p><i>OHV Use</i>: The proposed OHV limitations would have negligible impacts to OHV users, since minimal use presently occurs in the affected area. Temporary exceptions for off-road travel would be granted to Tribal members and may be granted to others who require periodic cross-country motorized access within the ACEC.</p> <p><i>Recreation</i>: The proposed facilities and interpretive signs [continued]</p>		

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<i>Camas Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<p>management tools (e.g., implementing rangeland standards and guidelines) are sufficient to maintain and improve riparian conditions. If a wing fence is constructed at the Sheep Bridge to manage livestock impacts, the effects to the riparian zone would be as described in Alternative 2.</p> <p><i>Visual Resources:</i> Not designating the nominated ACEC would have no impact on the area's visual resources. The steep canyon walls limit access for development activities and livestock grazing; there is very little risk these activities would occur and affect visual quality. People can access the nominated ACEC area by a trail, but current management is sufficient to protect the trail and ACEC area from damage that could result from visitor use. An ACEC designation is not needed to educate the public about the fragile nature of the riparian resources, make trail improvements, or implement other actions that would protect scenic values.</p>	<p><i>Recreation</i> (continued): might attract additional users besides hunters and anglers. However, the area is unlikely to experience dramatic increases in recreation use due to the proximity of more popular facilities at Magic Reservoir.</p> <p><i>Riparian Areas:</i> Excluding livestock from the ACEC through the wing fence construction to Sheep Bridge would increase the rate at which native willows and sedges are established and spread within the wetted riparian zone. This improvement of riparian vegetation communities would accelerate the repair of livestock-related streambank damage and improve floodplain function and stability.</p> <p><i>Visual Resources:</i> A VRM Class II designation would ensure that activities are designed so as to retain the ACEC's scenic values. However, construction of a visitor station/kiosk may slightly increase the risk of visual resource degradation in a small portion of the ACEC by increasing visitor use of the easily accessible area above the canyon walls.</p>		

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<i>Coyote Hills ACEC</i>	<i>Cultural Resources:</i> General protection and management of cultural resources would continue in accordance with relevant law, regulation, and policy. Cultural resources would be fully protected, except for situations where unauthorized actions may occur (e.g., vandalism or unauthorized excavation and collection).			
	<i>Cultural Resources:</i> Specific management actions designed to pro-actively manage cultural resources in the nominated ACEC area would not necessarily be implemented. However, an ACEC designation is not required to initiate a Cultural Resource Management Plan or other protective management actions, if additional management direction is deemed necessary to manage and protect the cultural resources in the nominated area. <i>Minerals Resources:</i> Continuation of existing management would have no effect on minerals resources, exploration, or development. Site-specific cultural clearances would continue to be required prior to approval of minerals actions; this would ensure that proposed mineral activities in the nominated ACEC area do not adversely affect cultural resources. <div style="text-align: right;">[continued]</div>	<i>Cultural Resources:</i> Completing a Cultural Resources Management Plan would identify proactive management for cultural sites throughout the ACEC, rather than just the project-oriented site protection that occurs under current management. Mineral material sales restrictions would eliminate the potential for surface disturbance from this activity on most of the ACEC's acres. OHV limitations would reduce surface disturbance and the risk of damage to cultural resources from cross-country vehicle travel. OHV limitations would also reduce public access that may result in unauthorized collection or vandalism. (Note: OHV use in the ACEC area is light; these OHV limitations would only slightly reduce the risk of resource damage.) Although the intent of the ACEC designation would be to protect cultural values, there is some risk that highlighting those values would increase public knowledge of the <div style="text-align: right;">[continued]</div>	Same as Alternative 1.	

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<i>Coyote Hills ACEC</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<i>Off-highway Vehicle Use:</i> Continuation of existing management would have no effect on OHV use. Current OHV use in the nominated ACEC area is light; if motorized vehicle use increases to the point where cultural resources are being affected, the BLM has authority to restrict OHV use in order to protect cultural and other resource values (43 CFR 8341.2).	<i>Cultural Resources (continued):</i> resources' locations and thereby increase the potential for unauthorized excavation and vandalism. <i>Mineral Resources:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Restricting new mineral material sales and free use permit sites to public lands adjacent to the Bliss-Hill City Road and State Highway 46 would limit the BLM's ability to issue free use permits for materials needed to maintain public roads. The BLM may not be able to satisfy Gooding County's future needs for mineral materials used in road maintenance. The proposed restrictions may also affect the BLM's ability to satisfy the public's future demands for community pit sites/common use areas. (Note: Approval of any new mineral material site development within the ACEC would require site-specific NEPA and cultural resource inventory, clearances, and mitigation.) [continued]		

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<i>Coyote Hills ACEC (continued)</i>		<i>OHV Use:</i> The proposed OHV limitations would have negligible impacts to OHV users, since minimal use presently occurs in the affected area. Exceptions for off-road travel would be granted to Tribal members and may be granted to others who require periodic cross-country motorized access within the ACEC.		
<i>Dry Creek ACEC/RNA</i>	Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated Dry Creek ACEC) would have no effect on the lands program, livestock grazing program, minerals resources, off-highway vehicle use, visual resources, or the Wild and Scenic River eligibility determination for Dry Creek. [continued]	<i>Lands:</i> The restriction on new land use authorizations would have minimal or no effect since the lands in the proposed ACEC/RNA are remote and already restricted from most forms of development because of WSA and/or eligible WSR status. If lands or realty actions are proposed in the ACEC, they could be re-routed or otherwise addressed during the pre-application process. [continued]	Same as Alternative 1.	

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<p><i>Dry Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p><i>Noxious Weeds:</i> No chemical weed control activities have occurred recently in the nominated ACEC area. Small, isolated infestations of either diffuse knapweed or rush skeletonweed may be occurring in the area from infestations located to the west of Dry Creek. The nominated ACEC area would be inventoried for noxious weeds when a weed inventory effort is conducted in the adjacent Bennett Hills. Any weed infestations discovered during the inventory may be spot-treated with herbicides. Because of the nominated area's Wilderness Study Area and eligible Wild and Scenic River status, treatment of weed infestations would be a high priority. Weed populations would be contained, although it is unlikely that weed populations could ever be completely eradicated, since new sources of infestation could be introduced over time. All chemical treatments would be in conformance with the guidelines contained in the environmental assessment for Noxious Weed Control in Wilderness Study Areas (ID-050-91040). [cont.]</p>	<p><i>Livestock Grazing:</i> Closing the proposed ACEC/RNA to livestock grazing would have no effect, since little to no use is presently occurring in the ACEC area. No AUMs would be lost and no reductions would occur on the affected allotment (Black Canyon) as a result of the designation.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Closing the ACEC to mineral material sales and free use permits would prevent the disposal of saleable minerals from the ACEC, but would not have a significant impact on the BLM's ability to satisfy the public demand for saleable minerals. Any application for the disposal of mineral material could likely be satisfied by disposal from nearby public lands. The closure would be no real change from existing management, since the proposed ACEC area lies within a WSA where surface-disturbing activities are restricted.</p> <p>[continued]</p>		

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<p><i>Dry Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p><i>Riparian:</i> The riparian area would remain in a near pristine, fully functional condition as a result of the nominated area's remoteness and WSA status. The riparian values would continue to be protected in order to maintain the creek's eligibility for further study as a Wild and Scenic River.</p> <p><i>Visual Resources:</i> Existing scenic values would be maintained under current management. Because of the nominated area's status as a designated Wilderness Study Area, the scenic values are already managed under guidelines to maintain a landscape setting that appears unaltered by humans. The area must also be managed to protect the outstandingly remarkable scenic values which qualified the creek as eligible for a Wild and Scenic River suitability study.</p>	<p><i>Noxious Weeds:</i> Emphasis on preventing noxious weed invasion would help ensure that existing weed populations are controlled and new infestations are treated quickly and to the extent possible. It is unlikely that weed populations could ever be completely eradicated, since new (e.g., windborne) sources of infestation are likely to be introduced over time.</p> <p><i>OHV Use:</i> Designating the ACEC as "closed" to OHV use would have no effect on OHV use since the ACEC lies within a WSA (no cross country travel is allowed) and no routes cross the ACEC or occur on the perimeter.</p> <p><i>Riparian Areas:</i> The ACEC designation would ensure the creek's riparian values are maintained over the long term. The ACEC designation would have little practical effect on future management of riparian resources, since these resources are already protected through a WSA designation and WSR eligibility (based, in part, on ecological outstandingly remarkable values).</p> <p>[continued]</p>		

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<i>Dry Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i>		<p><i>Visual Resources:</i> Designating and managing the ACEC as VRM Class I would ensure that future management activities in the ACEC are designed in such a way as to preserve the ACEC's existing scenic qualities. This management change would have little practical impact, since the proposed ACEC lies within a WSA and is already managed to maintain a landscape setting that appears unaltered by humans.</p> <p><i>Wild and Scenic Rivers:</i> The ACEC/RNA designation would maintain the outstandingly remarkable values which resulted in the Dry Creek stream segment's eligibility determination.</p>		

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<p><i>King Hill Creek ACEC/RNA</i></p>	<p>The nominated ACEC area includes approximately 1,660 acres managed by the Shoshone Field Office and 1,200 acres managed by the Four Rivers Field Office - BLM. The following analysis would apply to the entire nominated area.</p> <p>Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated King Hill Creek ACEC) would have no effect on the lands program, livestock grazing program, minerals exploration or development, off-highway vehicle use, visual resources, or the Wild and Scenic River eligibility determination for King Hill Creek.</p> <p><i>Fisheries:</i> Native trout species would continue to be at risk should non-native species be introduced.</p> <p>[continued]</p>	<p>The proposed ACEC/RNA includes approximately 1,660 acres managed by the Shoshone Field Office and 1,200 acres managed by the Four Rivers Field Office. The following analysis would apply to the entire area proposed for designation.</p> <p><i>Fisheries:</i> The proposed ACEC/RNA designation and management would protect and improve redband trout habitat and help insure the genetic purity of the existing strain of redband trout. Protection of the genetic strain would help reduce the need to list redband trout as a threatened or endangered species.</p> <p><i>Lands:</i> The restriction on new land use authorizations would have minimal or no effect since the lands in the proposed ACEC/RNA are remote and already restricted from most forms of development because of WSA and/or eligible WSR status. If lands or realty actions are proposed in the ACEC, they could be re-routed or otherwise addressed during the pre-application process.</p> <p><i>Livestock Grazing:</i> Closing the proposed King Hill Creek ACEC to livestock grazing would have no effect, since little to no grazing use is presently occurring in the ACEC area. (The affected area is generally unsuitable for grazing due to steepness and poor accessibility for livestock.) No AUMs would be lost and no reductions would occur on the affected allotments (King Hill in the Shoshone Field Office and Hammet #1 in the Four Rivers Field Office) as a result of the designation.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Closing the ACEC to mineral material sales and free use permits would prevent the disposal of saleable minerals from the ACEC, but would not have a significant impact on the BLM's ability to satisfy the public demand for saleable minerals. Any application for the disposal of mineral material could likely be satisfied by disposal from nearby public lands. The closure would be no real change from existing management, since the majority of the proposed ACEC area lies within a WSA where surface-disturbing activities are restricted.</p> <p><i>Noxious Weeds:</i> Emphasis on eliminating non-native invasive plant species would help ensure that any existing weed populations are controlled and new infestations are treated to the extent possible. The more intense level of resource management would result in new weed infestations being detected early and appropriate control treatments applied as soon as effective control conditions allow. It is unlikely that weed populations could ever be completely eradicated, since new (e.g., windborne) sources of infestation are likely to be introduced over time.</p>	<p>[continued]</p>	<p>[continued]</p>

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<i>King Hill Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<p><i>Noxious Weeds:</i> No chemical weed control activities have occurred recently in the nominated ACEC area. Small, isolated infestations of either diffuse knapweed or rush skeletonweed may be occurring in the area from infestations located to the west of King Hill Creek. The nominated ACEC area would be inventoried for noxious weeds when a weed inventory effort is conducted in the adjacent Bennett Hills. Any weed infestations discovered during the inventory may be spot-treated with herbicides. Because of the nominated area's Wilderness Study Area and eligible Wild and Scenic River status, treatment of weed infestations would be a high priority. Weed populations would be contained, although it is unlikely that weed populations could ever be completely eradicated, since new sources of infestation could be introduced over time. All chemical treatments would be in conformance with the guidelines contained in the environmental assessment for Noxious Weed Control in Wilderness Study Areas (ID-050-91040). [cont.]</p>	<p><i>Riparian:</i> The existing, near pristine riparian zone would be maintained. The increases in management intensity and priority, coupled with the exclusion of livestock grazing, would result in a slight improvement in both upslope watershed condition and riparian function. The improvements would be minor because there is presently only light grazing above the rim and no grazing in the riparian area.</p> <p><i>OHV Use:</i> Designating the ACEC as "closed" to OHV use would have no effect on OHV use since most of the ACEC lies within a WSA (no cross country travel is allowed), no routes cross the ACEC, the area is not readily accessible, and minimal OHV use occurs there at present.</p> <p><i>Visual Resources:</i> Designating and managing the ACEC as VRM Class I would ensure that future management activities in the ACEC are designed in such a way as to preserve the ACEC's existing scenic qualities. This management change would have little practical impact, since the majority of the proposed ACEC lies within a WSA and is already managed to maintain a landscape setting that appears unaltered by humans. The BLM also presently manages the ACEC area to protect the outstandingly remarkable scenic values that resulted in the creek's Wild and Scenic River eligibility determination.</p> <p><i>Wild and Scenic Rivers:</i> The ACEC/RNA designation would maintain the outstandingly remarkable values which resulted in the King Hill Creek stream segment's eligibility determination.</p>		

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<i>King Hill Creek ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<p><i>Riparian:</i> The riparian area would likely remain in a near pristine, fully functional condition as a result of the nominated area's remoteness and WSA status. The riparian values would continue to be protected in order to maintain the creek's eligibility for further study as a Wild and Scenic River.</p> <p><i>Visual Resources:</i> Existing scenic values would be maintained under current management. Because the majority of the nominated ACEC area lies within a designated Wilderness Study Area, most of the area is already managed under guidelines to maintain a landscape setting that appears unaltered by humans. The entire stream corridor must also be managed to protect the outstandingly remarkable scenic values which qualified the creek as eligible for a Wild and Scenic River suitability study.</p>			

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>McKinney Butte ACEC/RNA</i>	<p>Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated McKinney Butte ACEC) would have no effect on the lands program, minerals exploration and development, or off-highway vehicle use. These activities would still be guided by the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act and the Upper Snake River District Cave Management Plan (USDI-BLM, 1999).</p> <p><i>Cave Resources:</i> Eleven caves in the nominated ACEC area are currently designated as significant. The existing level of cave-related management attention and emphasis would continue, resulting in a substantial risk of adverse impacts to the physical, scenic, and biological cave resources in the area. A partial list of some of the kinds of cave resource values which may be impacted includes geologic features, fragile mineral formations, bat hibernacula, and cave habitat quality.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[continued]</p>	<p><i>Cave Resources:</i> Two additional caves would become significant upon designation of the proposed McKinney Butte ACEC, resulting in a total of 13 known significant caves in the ACEC area. The significance designation would give all the caves in the ACEC area the added protection provided by the appropriate Federal cave regulations and BLM policy. The proposed ACEC designation would likely result in an increased level of management presence and management emphasis in the ACEC area. Some of the likely outcomes from this action would be earlier detection of any cave resource degradation, an increase in protection of both known and undiscovered cave resource values, and a greater likelihood that any proposed cave projects or management actions would be funded and implemented. Fewer adverse impacts to the physical, scenic, and biological cave resources would be expected than under existing management.</p> <p><i>Lands:</i> Prohibiting new land authorizations in the area could have some impact to utilities, but it is not foreseen to be very much based on the currently low use in the area.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Closing the ACEC to mineral material sales and free use permits would prevent the disposal of saleable minerals from the ACEC, but would not have a significant impact on the BLM's ability to satisfy the public demand for saleable minerals. Any application for the disposal of mineral material could likely be satisfied by disposal from nearby public lands.</p> <p><i>OHV Use:</i> The proposed OHV use limitations would eliminate cross country use in the ACEC area. This limitation would primarily affect recreationists (e.g., hunters) and ranchers who are used to cross-country access in the McKinney Butte area. (Note: Exceptions for off-road travel are granted to Tribal members and may be granted to others who require periodic cross-country motorized access within the ACEC.)</p> <p><i>Paleontological Resources:</i> If, in the future, additional paleontological resources are discovered within the ACEC's caves, these resources would be afforded greater protection through the ACEC designation. For example, restrictions could be placed on cave access to ensure the preservation of identified deposits. Paleontological resources may be excavated by qualified, permitted researchers, but the resources would remain Federal property and be available for research by qualified professionals.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[continued]</p>		

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>McKinney Butte ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i>	<p><i>Paleontological Resources:</i> Caves in the nominated ACEC area have a high potential for additional paleontological resources. However, existing management does not emphasize management or protection of these resources. The risk of loss of significant known paleontological resources is low, however, since these resources must be considered during the NEPA analysis that would be completed prior to any proposed action.</p> <p><i>Wildlife:</i> Nine caves in the nominated area list biota as one of the values which contributed to their determination as significant caves. Monitoring and inventory of wildlife which utilize cave habitat in the area would continue at existing levels. This would result in the increased possibility that (a) some cave-adapted wildlife species may not be discovered, and (b) the habitat condition for some of the known wildlife species may be adversely impacted before the existing monitoring activities have detected a change in habitat condition.</p>		<p><i>Wildlife:</i> The increased management emphasis as a result of ACEC designation would reduce the potential level of human impact to many troglobitic (completing entire life cycle in caves) animal species found in the caves. This would primarily benefit cave-adapted and cave-loving wildlife. An anticipated systematic and thorough inventory of cave life, followed by specific cave monitoring actions, would benefit and conserve the many types of animals which use the caves for part or all of their life cycle needs. The expected increases in the type, level, and frequency of cave habitat monitoring would result in earlier detection of habitat degradation and reduce the level of adverse impacts to the wildlife species utilizing the caves.</p>	

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<p><i>Tee Maze ACEC/RNA</i></p>	<p>Continuation of existing management (i.e., not designating the nominated McKinney Butte ACEC) would have no effect on the lands program, minerals exploration and development, or off-highway vehicle use. These activities would still be guided by the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act and the Upper Snake River District Cave Management Plan (USDI - BLM, 1999).</p> <p><i>Cave Resources:</i> Eleven caves in the nominated ACEC area have been designated as significant. The existing level of cave-related management attention and emphasis would continue, resulting in a substantial risk of adverse impacts to the physical, scenic, and biological cave resources in the area. A partial list of some of the kinds of cave resource values which may be impacted includes geologic features, fragile mineral formations, bat hibernacula, and cave habitat quality.</p> <p><i>Paleontological Resources:</i> Caves in the nominated ACEC [continued]</p>	<p><i>Cave Resources:</i> One additional cave would become significant upon designation of the proposed Tee-Maze ACEC, resulting in a total of 12 known significant caves in the ACEC area. The significance designation would give all the caves in the ACEC area the added protection provided by the appropriate Federal cave regulations and BLM policy. The proposed ACEC designation would likely result in an increased level of management presence and management emphasis in the ACEC area. Some of the likely outcomes from this action would be earlier detection of any cave resource degradation, an increase in protection of both known and undiscovered cave resource values, and a greater likelihood that any proposed cave projects or management actions would be funded and implemented. Fewer adverse impacts to the physical, scenic, and biological cave resources would be expected than under existing management.</p> <p><i>Lands:</i> Prohibiting new land authorizations in the ACEC is not expected to have an impact, based on the current low use of the area and the opportunity to use an existing utility right-of-way corridor. The close proximity of the proposed ACEC to public access routes makes the area accessible to the public and for utilities uses. Highway 75 runs along the eastern boundary of the ACEC, and this highway has been used for utilities. Future utilities would be allowed within the existing Highway 75 right-of-way corridor; therefore, no impacts are expected.</p> <p><i>Minerals:</i> The proposed designation would have no effect on leasable or locatable minerals activity, since this type of activity is unlikely to occur in the ACEC area. Limiting new mineral materials site developments to public lands adjacent to State Highway 75 may affect the BLM's ability to satisfy the public's future demand for mineral materials. These impacts are expected to be minimal because future demand for mineral materials can be met by sources on public lands outside the ACEC.</p> <p><i>OHV Use:</i> The proposed OHV use limitations would eliminate cross country use in the ACEC area. This limitation would primarily affect recreationists (e.g., hunters) who are used to cross-country access in the Tee-Maze area. (Note: Exceptions for off-road travel are granted to Tribal members and may be granted to others who require periodic cross-country motorized access within the ACEC.)</p> <p><i>Paleontological Resources:</i> If, in the future, additional paleontological resources are discovered within the ACEC's caves, these resources would be afforded greater protection through the ACEC designation. For example, restrictions could be placed on cave access to ensure the preservation of identified deposits. Paleontological resources may be excavated by qualified, permitted researchers, but the resources would remain Federal property and be available for research by qualified professionals.</p>		<p>[continued]</p>

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<p><i>Tee Maze ACEC/RNA</i> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p><i>Paleontological Resources</i> (continued): area have a high potential for additional paleontological resources. However, existing management does not emphasize management or protection of these resources. The risk of loss of significant known paleontological resources is low, however, since these resources must be considered during the NEPA analysis that would be completed prior to any proposed action.</p> <p><i>Wildlife:</i> Eleven caves in the nominated area list biota as one of the values which contributed to their determination as significant caves. Monitoring and inventory of wildlife which utilize cave habitat in the area would continue at existing levels. This would result in the increased possibility that (a) some cave-adapted wildlife species may not be discovered, and (b) the habitat condition for some of the known wildlife species may be adversely impacted before the existing monitoring activities have detected a change in habitat condition.</p>		<p><i>Wildlife:</i> The increased management emphasis as a result of ACEC designation would reduce the potential level of human impact to many troglobitic (completing entire life cycle in caves) species found in the caves. This would primarily benefit cave-adapted and cave-loving wildlife. An anticipated systematic and thorough inventory of cave life, followed by specific cave monitoring actions, would benefit and conserve the many types of animals which use the caves for part or all of their life cycle needs. The expected increases in the type, level, and frequency of cave habitat monitoring would result in earlier detection of habitat degradation and reduce the level of adverse impacts to the wildlife species utilizing the caves.</p>	

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
Cumulative Impacts	The analysis of cumulative impacts includes the consideration of past, present and reasonably foreseeable impacts that could result from a specific action or set of actions.			
	<p><i>Cave Resources:</i> Failure to provide added management attention and emphasis to the physical and biological cave resources would result in the continued incremental loss of non-renewable resources and the degradation of fragile renewable resources found in the caves within the planning area.</p>	<p><i>Cave Resources:</i> The proposed cave resources ACEC designations and management actions are designed to provide for recreational and scientific uses while conserving and protecting renewable and non-renewable cave resources. Following the creation of the expanded Craters of the Moon National Monument, some lands previously managed by the BLM are currently managed by the National Park Service. All caves on National Park Service land are automatically designated as significant caves; as a result, these caves will likely receive additional protection and management attention. The proposed designation of the McKinney Butte and Tee-Maze ACEC/RNAs, would result in further beneficial impacts to the physical, scenic, paleontological, and biological resources found in caves on the Snake River Plain.</p> <p><i>Economy and Society:</i> Many of the proposed ACECs (all except Camas Creek, McKinney Butte, and Tee-Maze) already have a WSA designation on some or all of the proposed ACEC lands, with accompanying management restrictions. Two of the proposed ACECs (Dry Creek and King Hill Creek) also have an eligible Wild and Scenic River determination which includes management constraints. Designating the proposed ACECs would further limit some forms of public use on the affected public lands (e.g., land use authorizations, OHV use, livestock grazing, mineral materials site development). However, the ACEC designation would protect the identified ACEC values for the long term, in the event that a WSA is released by Congress from wilderness review and/or the eligible Wild and Scenic River segment is not found suitable for inclusion in the Nationwide system.</p> <p><i>Fisheries:</i> The proposed King Hill Creek ACEC designation and management actions are expected to provide additional protective measures to maintain the genetic integrity and current population of Interior redband trout occurring in the drainage. The protective measures and additional management attention applied to streams containing redband trout in the adjacent Lower Snake River District - BLM, and the USFS Humboldt-Toiyabe, Boise and Payette National Forests, when combined with the actions proposed for the King Hill Creek ACEC, would maintain and may increase the integrity and purity of the redband trout gene pool. This action would help maintain the natural diversity of the genetic resource amongst redband trout populations.</p>		

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources</i>	<p>Casual, unpermitted activity by public land users could have an impact to cultural, paleontological, or cave resources that is irreversible and irretrievable; unauthorized collection and excavation are known to have occurred in the Field Office area. Existing legislation (Archeological Resources Protection Act, Federal Cave Resources Protection Act) defines penalties for such damage to cultural resources or cave resources. It is beyond the capability of law, regulation, policy, or existing or proposed management to prevent all inadvertent or willfully harmful activities that may result in irreversible and irretrievable damage to cultural, paleontological, or cave resources in the Shoshone Field Office area.</p>			
	<p><i>Cave Resources and Paleontological Resources:</i> The potential for irretrievable loss of cave formations and vertebrate paleontological resources would continue without the added level of management presence and management emphasis afforded by the two nominated cave ACECs.</p> <p><i>Fisheries:</i> Failure to provide additional protection to the redband trout habitat in King Hill Creek would leave this genetically pure trout population at continued risk of becoming hybridized with non-native trout strains. The result of this action would be the loss of the distinct genetic composition of this redband trout population.</p>	<p><i>Cultural Resources:</i> The proposed Bennett Hills and Coyote Hills ACEC designations may draw increased attention to the cultural resources in those areas, thereby increasing the risk of unauthorized excavation or vandalism which could result in an irreversible and irretrievable loss of cultural resources.</p> <p>[continued]</p>		

Identified Issue: New ACEC Designations <i>Proposed ACEC</i>	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3 (BLM Preferred)	Alternative 4
<i>Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources</i> <i>(continued)</i>		<p>ACEC designations are generally considered permanent, unless the designations are amended or reversed through a future land use plan amendment. The loss of resource and land use opportunities that would occur as a result of an ACEC designation and related management actions is an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the affected resources and land uses. Depending on the specific ACEC being considered, the designations proposed in these amendments include management actions which would restrict future uses for some or all of the following purposes: livestock grazing, land use authorizations, mineral material sales, and motorized vehicle use. These management actions would result in an irreversible and irretrievable loss of those land uses within the affected ACECs. The loss of livestock grazing and OHV use is considered to be minor, since very little livestock grazing or OHV use presently occurs in the affected ACECs. The loss of mineral materials site development opportunity is also considered minor for four of the seven affected ACECs (Camas Creek, Dry Creek, King Hill Creek, McKinney Butte); adequate alternative mineral material sites could be developed on public lands in close proximity to the affected ACECs. The Bennett Hills, Coyote Hills, and Tee-Maze ACEC designations would result in a more substantial loss of mineral material resources, to the extent that (a) some local road departments may find it difficult to satisfy their needs for mineral materials for road maintenance purposes, and (b) the BLM may not be able to meet other future public demand for mineral materials. The proposed restriction on new land use authorizations would have minimal impact within four of the five affected ACECs (Camas Creek, Dry Creek, King Hill Creek, and McKinney Butte); the affected areas are either remote and already restricted from new land use authorizations, have little current or foreseen use, and/or lie within areas where actions could be re-routed elsewhere. The impacts would be slightly greater within the Tee-Maze ACEC where there is public interest in authorizations for water pipelines and utilities.</p>		

Consistency Efforts and Determination

NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1502.16(c)) and BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.3-2) require the BLM to attempt to achieve consistency between BLM resource management plans and the following:

1. The officially approved or related resource-related plans, policies, and programs of Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments; and
2. In the absence of officially approved or related resource-related plans, policies, and programs of Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, then the officially approved and adopted resource-related policies and programs of Indian Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, so long as the guidance and resource management plans are consistent with the policies, programs, and provisions of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands.

During preparation of this environmental assessment, the following efforts were made to ensure consistency with management strategies officially approved or adopted by Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments.

In December 1999, BLM mailed letters to Tribal, Federal, State and local offices, explaining the BLM's intent to prepare amendments to four land use plans and asking for information about their approved or adopted resource related plans, programs, or policies. Other efforts to achieve consistency included briefings for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and U.S. and Idaho Congressional representatives and staff, and meetings with County Commissioners and City Councils.

The analysis of existing management identified a likely inconsistency with local government plans (see page 64). Existing management makes insufficient public lands available for disposal to meet the local governments' needs for infrastructure development, community expansion, and economic development. Additional public lands may be made available for the governments' consideration, but only after a plan amendment is completed to identify those lands for potential disposal. Over time, local governments may find that existing management direction does not help them meet their planning goals and objectives within reasonable time frames.

No inconsistencies were identified for Alternatives 2, 3, or 4. However, Alternative 3 is believed to be the most effective at enabling the Tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments to achieve their resource-related planning goals and objectives within reasonable time frames.

Consultation, Coordination, and Public Involvement

Public and tribal comments received during the scoping period were used to determine the scope of the proposed action and alternatives discussed in this document.

The BLM initiated the scoping process for these amendments with a *Federal Register* “Notice of Intent to Prepare Land Use Plan Amendments for Land Tenure Adjustment and New Designations of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) within the Upper Snake River District (USRD), Shoshone Field Office, in Southern Idaho” (December 15, 1999: Vol. 64, No. 240, pp. 70050-51). No responses were received from the public as a result of this notice.

Additional attempts were made to encourage public involvement through mailings, press releases, open house style meetings, presentations, and briefings.

A “Scoping Newsletter” distributed on December 6, 1999, requested input on preliminary planning issues, management concerns, and planning criteria. This document was sent to those individuals, agencies, and organizations the BLM anticipated would be interested in the proposed amendments. On January 7, 2000, an additional scoping document was mailed; this document described preliminary alternatives and zone designations, and requested comments by January 31, 2000. An open house was held on January 12, 2000, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to present information and answer questions from the public. Thirty-nine participants registered at the open house and 56 comments were submitted for consideration. Briefings were given to the “Wing and Roots” forum of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes (11/10/99), the Land Use Policy Commission of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (11/24/99, 6/15/00, 3/12/01, and 3/12/02), and the Upper Snake River District Resource Advisory Council (12/2/99, 11/30/00, 2/22/01, 5/31/01, 7/25/01, 11/29/01, and 2/28/02). Upon request, additional presentations/meetings were held with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2/25/00, 3/1/02, and 3/20/02), the Idaho Department of Water Resources (2/6/01 and 12/18/01), the Idaho Department of Lands (2/6/01, 12/18/01, and 3/18/02), Blaine County (2/22/00), and the City of Ketchum (2/22/00). On May 10, 2000, State Representative Wendy Jaquet held a public meeting for her constituents to gather their input on the proposed amendments.

In an attempt to reach other potentially interested individuals and organizations not specified on the mailing lists, press releases were sent to the following newspapers on 12/01/99 (“BLM Seeks Public Feedback on Area Land Use Plan”) and 12/28/99 (“BLM Schedules Public Open House on Plan Amendments”): *Twin Falls Times News*, *South Idaho Press* (Burley), *Gooding County Leader*, *Wood River Journal*, *North Side News*, *Idaho Mountain Express*, *Lincoln County Journal*, and *Minidoka County News*. The scoping documents, news releases, and *Federal Register* notice were also posted on the Idaho BLM web page.

All local governments, tribal governments, and Federal and State agencies having resource management responsibilities or interests within the planning area were informed of the proposed plan amendments and asked for information regarding the scope of the amendments and the issues and concerns they would like considered. (**Note:** Issues and concerns are discussed on pages 2 to 3 of this Environmental Assessment.)

During the scoping period the BLM received comments from the following Indian tribes, government agencies and representatives, businesses, organizations, and individuals:

Indian Tribes

- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
- Shoshone-Paiute Tribes

Government Agencies and Representatives

- Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, and Minidoka County Commissioners
- Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, and Minidoka County Planning and Zoning
- BLM Lands Foundation
- Camas Soil Conservation District
- Cities of Ketchum, Twin Falls, Bliss, Shoshone, Jerome, and Hailey
- Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish & Game
- Environmental Protection Agency, Seattle
- Governor Dirk Kempthorne
- Idaho Department of Fish & Game
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Idaho Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
- Idaho State Legislature Representative Wendy Jaquet
- Idaho State Senator Denton Darrington
- Idaho State Senator Clint Stennett
- Lincoln County Extension Office
- Malad Gorge State Park
- Minidoka County Community Development
- Twin Falls County Parks & Recreation
- Twin Falls Research & Extension Center
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Boise
- U.S. Forest Service, Sawtooth National Forest, Ketchum Ranger District
- U.S. Forest Service, Sawtooth National Forest, Fairfield Ranger District
- U.S. Senator Larry E. Craig
- U.S. Senator Michael D. Crapo
- U.S. Representative Mike Simpson
- Upper Snake River District Resource Advisory Council
- University of Idaho, Anthropology Department
- Wood River Resource Conservation & Development

Businesses, Organizations, and Private Individuals

- American Lands Alliance
- American Wildlands
- Committee For Idaho's High Desert
- Flat Top Sheep Co.
- Gem State Realty, Inc.
- Hulen Meadows Water Company & Owners Association, Inc.
- Idaho Chapter of Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA)
- Idaho Conservation League
- Idaho Falconer's Association
- Idaho Rivers United
- Idaho Watershed Project (Western Watershed Project)
- Idaho Wildlife Federation, Land Exchange Commission
- National Wildlife Federation
- Neilsen & Company
- North American Falconer's Association
- Pocket Ranch Dairy
- Sun Valley Real Estate, LLC
- Tews Land & Livestock
- The Brokerage at Warm Springs
- The Jarvis Group
- Tunupa Ranch
- Union Pacific Railroad Co.
- USA - Unlimited Sports Action
- U.S. Combustion Products, Inc.
- Wood River Land Trust
- 47 private individuals

At present, the mailing list of those interested in the proposed amendments includes more than 500 persons, agencies, and organizations.